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Message Text

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53
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-15 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-03 SIL-01 /099 W
---------- 014284
R 181330Z NOV 74
FM AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3583
INFO AMCONSUL PRETORIA
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY MASERU
AMEMBASSY MBABANE
/AMEMBASSY LONDON 362
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMCONSUL DURBAN
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

UNCLAS JOHANNESBURG 1221

CAPE TOWN ALSO FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, SF
SUBJ: LABOUR MINISTER VILJOEN FINALLY CHANGES HIS TUNE

1. SPEAKING AT NATIONAL DEMETTPMENT & MANAGEMENT FOUNDATION (NDMF)--SPONSORED SUMPOSIUM ON WORKS AND LIAISON COMMITTEES IN JOHANNESBURG NOVEMBER 13, LABOUR MINISTER MARAIS VILJOEN REVEALED THAT HE WAS NOT UNALTERABLY OPPOSED TO MAKING OR PERMITTING CHANGES IN PRESENT SAG-IMPOSED BLACK INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS SYSTEM (LAST REVISED IN 1973) IF CHANGES WOULD HELP MAKE SYSTEM MORE EFFECTIVE. ANNOUNCING THAT SAG WANTED TO GIVE BLACKS "MORE AND MORE PARTI-CIPATION IN NEGOTIATING MACHINERY" HE CALLED FOR EXTENDING PRESENT MACHINERY "IN ORDER THAT IT CAN OPERATE NOT ONLY ON A FACTORY BASIS, BUT ALSO ON AN INDUSTRY BASIS." HE ALSO SPOKE OF
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TAKING STEPS TO MAKE COMMITTEE AGREEMENTS BINDING ON BOTH PARTIES.

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2. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS FROM FLOOR FOLLOWING ORAL PRESENTATION OF CASE STUDIES BY FIVE MAJOR FIRMS WHICH HAVE ESTABLISHED AND DEALT WITH WORKS AND/OR LIAISON COMMITTEES (MOBIL, METAL BOX, SCOTTISH CABLES, ROBERTS CONSTRUCTION & ISCOR) VILJOEN STATED INTER ALIA AS FOLLOWS: FIRST, THAT WHILE SAG HAD NO PLAN TO ACCORD OFFICIAL RECOGNITION TO BLACK TRADE UNIONS, NEITHER DID IT HAVE ANY INTENTION OF DECLARING THEM ILLEGAL; AND SECOND, THAT HE WAS PREPARED TO LIVE WITH PRACTICE WHICH SOME FIRMS APPEAR TO BE ADOPTING OF ESTABLISHING AND DEALING WITH MULTIRACIAL RPT MULTI-RACIAL COMMITTEES. THIS FROM A MAN WHO, FOR MONTHS, HAS BEEN SUMMARILY REJECTING ANY AND ALL SEUGGESTIONS ON WAYS AND MEANS OF IMPROVING INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS SYSTEM AND WHO HAS PUBLICLY TAKEN POSITION THAT MULTIRACIAL TRADE UNIONS WOULD RESULT IN RACIAL FRICTION AND UNREST.

3. COMMENT: LEST ANYONE GET IDEA FROM VILJOEN'S UNEXPECTED VERBAL CONCESSIONS THAT SOME SORT OF ENLIGHTENED BREAKTHROUGH MIGHT BE AT HAND ON SOUTH AFRICAN INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS FRONT, WE SHOULD POINT OUT THAT DURING PAST TWO YEARS ONLY ABOUT 1500 COMMITTEES COVERING ONLY SMALL FRACTION OF COUNTRY'S EMPLOYERS AND BLACK WORKERS HAVE COME INTO EXISTENCE AND ALSO THAT OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF NEW COMMITTEES ARE LIAISON TYPE, I.E., "COMPANY UNIONS" WHICH INCLUDE REPRESENTATIVES OF EMPLOYERS AS WELL AS WORKERS, RATHER THAN ALL-WORKER WORKS TYPE. THUS WE SHOULD RESIST TEMPTATION TO ASSUME THAT INDUSTRY-WIDE MULTIRACIAL COMMITTEES WOULD BE CRIDIBLE OR ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVE TO OR VIRTUALLY INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM GENUINE MULTIRACIAL TRADE UNIONS. NEVERTHELESS, IMPRESSION WE GET FROM VILJOEN'S NDMF PERFORMANCE IS THAT SAG, FULLY AWARE THAT BLACK INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS SYSTEM IS NOT WORKING WELL, IS NOW PREPARED TO GO ALONG WITH CERTAIN CHANGES AS LONG AS ITS SPOKESMEN CAN REPRESENT OR EMPHEMIZE CHANGES AS WAYS AND MEANS OF MAKING SYSTEM MORE EFFICTIVE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LABOR RELATIONS, HUMAN RIGHTS, INDUSTRIAL REFORMS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 NOV 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974JOHANN01221
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740332-0906
From: JOHANNESBURG
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741135/aaaabdgc.tel
Line Count: 95
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 NOV 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <08 NOV 2002 by chicheje>; APPROVED <04 DEC 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

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US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LABOUR MINISTER VILJOEN FINALLY CHANGES HIS TUNE
TAGS: ELAB, SF
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

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